



Wrapping up his first pastoral UK visit, the Coptic Church leader Pope Tawadros II has been welcomed to Clarence House by the Prince of Wales

Egypt's Orthodox Coptic Pope makes historic visits to the UK and Ireland

Egypt's Orthodox Coptic Pope was received this month by the Queen, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Prince of Wales during an historic pastoral visit across the United Kingdom.



A historic visit saw Orthodox Coptic Pope Tawadros meet the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

The meeting of the Queen and Pope Tawadros II, 118th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark took place on 9 May at Windsor Castle.

Tawadros presented the Queen with a Coptic icon portraying the Holy Family's famous 'Flight to Egypt' seen in the New Testament.

After the meeting, His Grace Bishop Angaelos, who leads of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK, said: "This meeting between Her Majesty and His Holiness is an embodiment of our Coptic Orthodox Church here in Britain, made

up of those, many of whom will have roots in Egypt, who still feel connected to Egypt, but are very integrated as British Copts.

“I am personally thankful for this meeting that reinforces this composite and naturally organic identity at the highest level of our Church and nations.”

Last week, Tawadros met Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby at Lambeth Palace.

The pair met privately before joining the rest of the delegation.

In an address at Lambeth, Pope Tawadros II thanked the Archbishop for his hospitality. He said: 'We are grateful to God for the co-operation, dialogue, and Christian love between our two Churches.

'We are hopeful and pray for more and more Christian unity globally and we believe it is possible through the love of God, and through the ecumenical blood of all Christian martyrs.'

Pope Tawadros signed the palace's guestbook with the words 'Love Never Ends'.

In turn, Welby praised the 'profound inspiration' of the Egyptian Coptic Church, which has been subject to severe persecution in recent months, including the Palm Sunday bombings on Coptic churches, which killed 45 and injured over 100.

Welby said: 'The courage of your people – their constant faith, their steadfastness, their long endurance – brings to life those words we read so often in the epistles of Saint Paul, and we are truly grateful and give thanks to God for you and for your people.'

On May 17, Pope Tawadros, alongside Bishop Angaelos, met with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at Clarence House. Prince Charles has been an outspoken voice against religious persecution in the Middle East and Egypt, publicly advocating for Christians and other minority groups in said regions.

Reflecting on the Coptic Pope's visit as a whole, His Grace Bishop Angaelos said: 'It has been a blessing for the Coptic community here in the United Kingdom to engage with their shepherd. It was also an opportunity for His Holiness to meet his flock and to encounter some of the work being done under the various ministries within the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom.'



'I am thankful that the visit was fruitful and gave His Holiness an overview of the diverse and dynamic role of Coptic Christians across Britain who endeavour to live faithfully according to their Christian principles, while being fully integrated into their surrounding community. I am also pleased that we had the opportunity to learn from the example of peaceful yet powerful resilience that His Holiness and our brothers and sisters in Egypt demonstrate on a daily basis.'

Following a meeting at the Palace of Westminster last week, where he addressed members of the House of Lords, Pope Tawadros II also laid a wreath in Westminster Hall to

remember victim of the Westminster terror attack, PC Keith Palmer.

Dublin visits to Archbishop and President

Pope Tawadros II, visited the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Marti yesterday, Thursday 18 May. It is the first time that Pope Tawadros, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, has visited Ireland as head of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Last month, Pope Francis visited Cairo at the invitation of Pope Tawadros and the grand imam of the mosque of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed el-Tayeb, as well as Catholic Bishops and the Egyptian government. Coptic Christians currently represent 80% of Christians in the Middle East.

Following a meeting between Pope Francis and Pope Tawadros in Egypt, a new common declaration was issued. It emphasised the need for intensified prayers for all Christians who are persecuted and killed for their faith, especially in Egypt and the Middle East. The declaration from Pope Francis and Pope Tawadros also called for a deepening of their shared roots in faith through common prayer, a common translation of the

Lord's Prayer and a common date for the celebration of Easter.

In a letter to Pope Tawadros published on Wednesday 10 May, to mark the day of friendship between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, Pope Francis said *“I assure Your Holiness of my continued prayers for you, and for peace in Egypt and the Middle East. In this Easter season I pray that the Holy Spirit, the strength and tenderness of God, may fill our hearts with his grace and kindle in them the fire of his love. May the Spirit of peace bestow on us an increase of hope, friendship and harmony.*

Following his visit to Archbishop Martin yesterday morning, Pope Tawadros went to Áras an Úachtaráin where President Michael D. Higgins greeted him.

Church of England rebukes breakaway conservative parish

The Church of England has rebuked a conservative parish that consecrated its senior minister a bishop in a breakaway move.

Rt Rev Paul Williams, Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, told evangelicals 'this is no time to be distracted by further fragmentation' as he urged British Anglicans against a split in a [blog post on the CofE's official Facebook page](#).

That Williams – himself an evangelical – made the first major episcopal intervention after Rev Jonathan Pryke of Jesmond Parish Church was provocatively made a bishop is arguably part of the CofE's attempt to avoid further division.

It is the latest in an ongoing row since Pryke's consecration that could herald a rupture with a separate Anglican structure effectively being set up in rivalry to the CofE.

In a question and answer sheet handed out to its congregation on Sunday, Jesmond's leaders warned conservative ministers are being 'filtered out' in the current CofE system.

'The aim is not to create a new denomination,' parishioners were told according to the [Thinking Anglicans](#) blog.

'This is one small but necessary step on behalf of faithful Church of England ministers and congregations nationwide in our mission to the nation.



**Paul Williams,
Bishop of Southwell
and Nottingham, is
from the evangelical
wing of the Church of
England.**

'This is not a step of "leaving the Church of England". It is the theologically liberal bishops and clergy that have "left the Church of England" doctrinally.

'This is a step to preserve the Church of England's heritage and mission which we have received.'

But Williams said although 'we are living in challenging times for our world and nation which creates uncertainty, leading to fear and

fragmentation', Anglicans are called to 'unity in the body of Christ'.

He wrote: 'We have experienced a period of significant social change in the UK, manifested in changing attitudes over issues such as human sexuality.

'While Christians may hold different viewpoints on how the Church should respond, we are unwavering in our resolve to value every human being as made in the image of God, calling all people to repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

'Whatever some would like to claim, the Church of England is and remains faithful to the teaching of Scripture as we have received it on these matters, including the understanding of marriage.'

In a direct challenge to a lecture given at Jesmond where the Archbishops of Canterbury and York were labelled heretics, Williams wrote: 'Let it be said, lest there be any doubt, that, whatever the challenges, we are greatly blessed to be led by two archbishops, Justin Welby and John Sentamu, with a passion for the gospel and faithfulness to the teaching of Christ.'

He said the Church of England was in a time of 'extraordinary opportunity' and warned the breakaway move would not 'help the cause of the gospel in our nation', directly appealing to evangelicals' desire to grow the church.

'As we navigate the challenges ahead let us take care to use well the very great opportunities given to us at this time in our nation to make Christ known, reflecting this in our resolve to remain united in the gospel we proclaim,' he wrote.

Historic proposals for Anglican and Methodist unity in USA

A group of Episcopalians and Methodists has released its proposal for full communion between the two denominations.

Full implementation of the proposal will take at least three years. The Episcopal Church General Convention and the United Methodist Church General Conference must approve the agreement, which culminates 15 years of exploration and more than 50 years of formal dialogue between the two churches. General Convention next meets in July 2018 in Austin,

Texas. The General Conference's next meeting is in 2020.

The 10-page proposal, titled "[A Gift to the World, Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness](#)," says it "is an effort to bring our churches into closer partnership in the mission and witness to the love of God and thus labor together for the healing of divisions among Christians and for the well-being of all."

Montana Bishop Frank Brookhart, Episcopal co-chair of the dialogue, and Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, United Methodist co-chair, wrote [in a recent letter](#) that "the relationship formed over these years of dialogue, and the recognition that there are no theological impediments to unity, pave the way for this current draft proposal."

In the coming months, there will be opportunities for feedback, regional gatherings and discussions on the proposal, according to a [May 17 press release](#).

"We encourage you to reach across denominational lines to establish new relationships and deepen existing relationships by shared study of these materials and mutual prayer for the unity our churches," Brookhart and Palmer wrote. "We believe that this proposal



The Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue Committee met in April in Charlotte, North Carolina.

represents a significant witness of unity and reconciliation in an increasingly divided world and pray that you will join us in carrying this work.”

[Additional related information, including historical documents, is available here.](#)

The Episcopal Church defines “full communion” to mean “a relation between distinct churches in which each recognizes the other as a catholic and apostolic church holding the essentials of the Christian faith.” The churches “become interdependent while remaining autonomous,” the church has said.

The Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue Committee, which developed the proposed agreement, says the two denominations are not seeking a merger but that they are “grounded in sufficient agreement in the essentials of Christian faith and order” to allow for the interchangeability of ordained ministries, among other aspects of the proposed agreement.

“We are blessed in that neither of our churches, or their predecessor bodies, have officially condemned one another, nor have they formally called into question the faith, the ministerial orders, or the sacraments of the other church,” the group said.

The proposal also benefited from the fact that Anglicans and Methodist have an on-going dialogue, the group said. The dialogue launched a report in 2015, “Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches”, describing its progress. The launch highlighted a then-new new relationship of full communion between Irish Anglican and Methodists churches, and the historic concrete steps towards an interchangeable ministry.

The Episcopal-United Methodist full-communion proposal acknowledges that the United

Methodist Church “is one of several expressions of Methodism” and notes that both denominations have been in dialogue with the historically African American Methodist churches for nearly 40 years. They have also worked with African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion, (AME Zion) and Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME) in various ecumenical groups.

The Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church have taken some interim steps toward full communion in recent years. In 2006, they entered into Interim Eucharistic Sharing, a step that allowed for clergy of the two churches to share in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper under certain guidelines. In 2010, the dialogue group issued a summary of its theological work called “A Theological Foundation for Full Communion between The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church”.

The proposal for full communion outlines agreements on the understanding of each order of ministry. The ministries of lay people, deacons Episcopal priests and United Methodist elders or presbyters (elder is the English translation of presbyter) would all be seen as interchangeable yet governed by the “standards and polity of each church.”

Both churches have somewhat similar understandings of bishops, according to the proposal.

“We affirm the ministry of bishops in The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church to be adaptations of the historic episcopate to the needs and concerns of the post-[American] Revolutionary missional context,” the dialogue says in the proposal. “We recognize the ministries of our bishops as fully valid and authentic.”

The Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church would pledge that future consecrations of bishops would include participation and laying on of hands by at least three bishops drawn from each other’s church and from the full-communion partners they hold in common, the Moravian Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Episcopal Church currently is in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, India; Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht; the Philippine Independent Church; the Church of Sweden and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the

Moravian Church. It is also engaged in formal bilateral talks with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Roman Catholic Church via the U.S. Conference of Bishops.

More information about the Episcopal Church's dialogue with the United Methodist Church is here.

The work of the Episcopal-United Methodist Dialogue is enabled by two General Convention resolutions: 2015-A107 and 2006-A055.

– Report by The Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg, senior editor and reporter for the Episcopal News Service.

In the community for the community: the vision shaping new Willowfield church facilities

The re-opening of Willowfield Church Hall on Saturday, May 20 (11am) marks the final piece in an visionary jigsaw.

The new facilities have replaced the dilapidated old ones which closed in December 2015. Now, 18 months on, they are ready to serve the purpose for which they have been created.



The vision behind this project was to provide the local residents with facilities which will be of real benefit to them.

This is an area of social deprivation devoid of community facilities. No longer is that the case.

A major focus is on the provision of activities for young people. With Willowfield Church and WPCA (Community Association) now able to cater for many more than before, there will be a wide range of clubs and activities on offer.

These include the provision of support for those trying to find work, in need of help in education, getting fit or learning new skills and volunteering opportunities.

But the facilities are not only for young people; there will also be activities for parents and small

children, for older people and pretty much everyone in between.

A new sports hall, health and fitness suite will give people plenty of opportunity to improve their fitness and get active.

Behind the church hall is a new area, known as the U-Turn project.

The work to provide sports facilities and a children's play park has been done in memory of a Robert Bunting, a young, local man who tragically died at the age of 26 in February, 2015, having been diagnosed with Metastatic Malignant Melanoma.

Robert's formative years were spent on the Woodstock Road, in the parish, and when he and his family became aware of his condition they turned to Willowfield Church for comfort and support.

After Robert's death, his family sought to repay the kindness, love and help they had received and they began thinking what they could give back to a community that had rallied around when they needed its help.



The old Willowfield Church halls

They wanted a fitting memorial to Robert and with sport having been what he loved, that inspired the project, now to be known as The U-Turn Project.

The U-Turn Project's aim will be to transform – turn – the lives of young people. For that reason the new facility includes a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), sited alongside the new halls.

Robert's father, Colin Bunting, is one of the Glebe Wardens who, along with Brian Mayes, has been much involved in the transformation of the church halls, working alongside the builders, design team and staff of Belfast City Council.

The renovation of the church halls and the creation of a state-of-the-art family-friendly park will give a major boost to the local community by aiding youth workers, volunteers and families and supporting local children and young people in their personal, social and spiritual development.

As well as generous support from Willowfield's parishioners, the project has been made possible as the result of significant funding from Belfast City Council – this is the first project to be funded and completed under the Belfast Investment Fund – the Department of Education (capital scheme for renovating church halls for activities for young people), Garfield Weston Foundation and Active Belfast.

For the past 15 years Willowfield Church's slogan has been: "In the Community – for the Community". The opening of these superb facilities will help that aim significantly.

Yesterday in Christian History, May 18

May 18, 1291: The last Christian territory taken by the Crusaders, Acre, falls to the Sultan of Egypt.

May 18, 1834: Sheldon Jackson, Presbyterian missionary to the frontier West and Alaska, is born in Minaville, New York. Jackson's reputation for ministering to the spiritual, physical, and social needs of both natives and settlers earned him the nicknames "Bishop of All Beyond" and "Apostle to Alaska".

May 18, 1920: Karol Wojtyla (who would take the name John Paul II when elected pope) is born in Wadowice, Poland.

Today in Christian History, May 19

May 19, 804: Alcuin of York, an English scholar who became an adviser to Charlemagne and the most prominent figure in the Carolingian Renaissance (the rebirth of classical learning under Charlemagne), dies. He also devised a handwriting system using both small and capital letters for easier reading.

May 19, 1805: Joshua V. Himes, best known for promoting William Miller's Second Advent movement, is born. Miller predicted the Second Coming between 1843 and 1844. When this did not happen, many followers deserted; others

reorganized themselves as Seventh-Day Adventists.

May 19, 1971: The musical Godspell, based on Matthew's gospel, opens at the Cherry Lane Theater in New York.

